

REMARKS

The Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-20 are pending. Claims 1, 10, and 16-19 are amended. Claims 1, 10, and 19 are independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner states that claims 11, 12, and 14-18 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form, and that claims 1-9, 19 and 20 would be allowable except for the minor informalities set forth in the claim objection.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the early indication of allowable subject matter in this application. Claim 10 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 16, and claims 1, 10, and 19 are amended to correct the minor informalities set forth by the Examiner.

Therefore all claims of the present application are in condition for allowance.

Claim for Priority

The Examiner has acknowledged the Applicants' claim for foreign priority.

Drawings

The Examiner has not indicated whether or not the drawings have been accepted. Clarification is respectfully requested in the next official communication.

Claim Objections

The Examiner has objected to claims 1-20 because of several informalities. In order to overcome this objection, Applicants have amended claims 1, 10, and 19 in order to correct the deficiencies pointed out by the Examiner. Independent claims 1 and 19 are now allowable. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection are respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claim 10 and 13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Weber (U.S. 6,497,507).

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As noted above, claim 10 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of objected-to claim 16, and claim 1 has been further amended to correct the minor informality set forth by the Examiner.

Therefore, independent claim 10 is in condition for allowance.

Independent claims 1 and 19 are allowable, as noted above.

All dependent claims are also in condition for allowance due to their dependency from allowable independent claims, or due to the additional novel features set forth therein.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

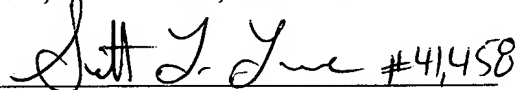
Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, he is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By  #41,458
James M. Slattery, #28,380
P. O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000

JMS:CTT/ags